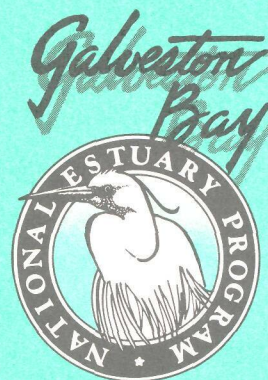


Sediment Quality Assessment Survey of the Galveston Bay System



Galveston Bay
National Estuary Program

GBNEP-30
May 1993

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The Galveston Bay National Estuary Program

Publication GBNEP-30
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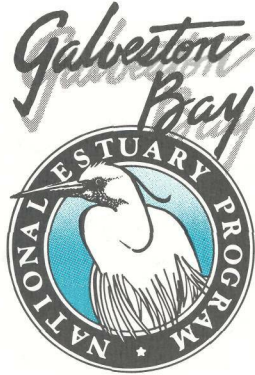
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The Galveston Bay National Estuary Program

Publication GBNEP-30
May, 1993

This project has been funded in part by the United States Environmental Protection Agency under assistance agreement # CE-006550-01 to the Texas Water Commission. The contents of this document do not necessarily represent the views of the United States Environmental Protection Agency or the Texas Water Commission, nor do the contents of this document necessarily constitute the views or policy of the Galveston Bay National Estuary Program Management Conference or its members. The information presented is intended to provide background information, including the professional opinion of the authors, for the Management Conference deliberations in drafting of official policy in the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). The mention of trade names or commercial products does not in any way constitute an endorsement or recommendation for use.



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Texans increasingly express their expectations for a clean environment in terms of entire ecosystems. Until recently, our tendency was to view environmental problems in isolated pieces we could understand—indeed this view was institutionalized (and seemingly immortalized) in an elaborate mosaic of fragmented jurisdictions. The Galveston Bay National Estuary Program (GBNEP) is a forerunner in elevating hands-on management of coastal environments to the level of the ecosystem; and in doing so, is encouraging an integration of traditionally disparate institutions.

The GBNEP was established under the authority of the Water Quality Act of 1987 to develop a *Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan* (CCMP) for Galveston Bay. The purpose of the CCMP is to address threats to the Bay resulting from pollution, development, and overuse. To address these threats, five years of work commenced in 1990, consisting of three phases: (1) Identification of the specific problems facing the Bay; (2) A Bay-wide effort to compile data and information to describe status, trends, and probable causes related to the identified problems; and (3) Creation of the CCMP itself to enhance governance of the Bay at the ecosystem level. The GBNEP is accomplishing this work through a cooperative agreement between the U.S. EPA (Region 6) and the State of Texas (administered by the Texas Water Commission).

The structure of the GBNEP reflects a strong commitment to consensus-building among all Galveston Bay user groups, government agencies, and the public. The GBNEP "Management Conference" consists of six Governor-appointed committees with broad representation, totaling about one hundred individuals. Meetings of these committees are also open to the public, and public participation in policy-setting and in Bay management are considered strengths of the program. When submitted to the Governor of Texas in late 1994, the CCMP will reflect thousands of hours of involvement (much in the form of volunteer time) by individuals who in various ways use, enjoy, or help govern this vital coastal resource.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
INTRODUCTION	2
MATERIALS AND METHODS	3
Site Selection	3
Field Measurements and Sample Collection	4
Sediment Chemistry	9
Sediment Toxicity Testing	10
Solid-phase Tests	10
Porewater Tests	10
Benthic Community Structure Analysis	11
RESULTS	12
Field Measurements and Sample Collection	12
Chemical and Physical Analyses	12
Sediment Toxicity Testing	13
Solid-phase Tests	13
Porewater Tests	15
Porewater Storage and Extraction Method Comparison Studies	17
Benthic Community Structure Analysis	17
Spearman Correlation Analysis	20
DISCUSSION	20
CONCLUSIONS	28
LITERATURE CITED	31
APPENDICES	35

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.	Sampling Sites for Galveston Bay Study	5
Table 2.	Stations with Excessive Metal Concentrations and Their AVS Normalized Values	14
Table 3.	Correlation Coefficients for Highly Significant Associations among Physical, Chemical, Biological and Toxicological Data	21
Table 4.	Effect Levels for Key Contaminants and Stations Exceeding Those Values	23
Table 5.	Station Ranks and Rank Sums of Species Diversity, Morphological Development, Normalized PAHs and Key Metals	26
Table 6.	Summary of Sediment Quality Triad Data	29

TABLE OF CONTENTS—Continued

Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Location of Sampling Sites in Galveston Bay Study	8
Figure 2.	Sites Exhibiting Significant Toxicity in the Sea Urchin Fertilization and Morphological Development Porewater Assays	16
Figure 3.	Mean Number of Species Per Site in Galveston Bay Study	18
Figure 4.	Mean Shannon-Wiener Species Diversity Indices for Sites in the Galveston Bay Study	19

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1.	Physical Parameters and Location of Collection Stations.....	37
Appendix 2.	Sediment Moisture, Total Organic Carbon and Grain Size Analysis.....	39
Appendix 3.	Sediment Chlorinated Hydrocarbon Concentrations	40
Appendix 4.	Sediment Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbon Concentrations	41
Appendix 5.	Quality Control Data for Pesticides and PCBs	46
Appendix 6.	Quality Control Data for PAHs.....	47
Appendix 7.	Sediment Metal Concentrations	49
Appendix 8.	Sediment AVS and SEM Analysis	53
Appendix 9.	Quality Control Data for Metals	54
Appendix 10.	Survival of <u>Grandidierella japonica</u> in 10 day Solid-Phase Test	55
Appendix 11.	Water Quality Summary at Beginning of Amphipod Solid-Phase Test	56
Appendix 12.	Water Quality Measurements on Day 4 of Amphipod Solid-Phase Test	58

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are numerous individuals who contributed to this multidisciplinary project. Dr. Cynthia Howard was involved in all aspects of the project from study design, site selection, sample collection and the entire benthic community structure component of the investigation. Will Roach was instrumental in helping to design the study and provided invaluable assistance and guidance throughout the project. Duane Chapman and Jim Biedenbach provided expert technical assistance in the conduct of the toxicity tests, statistical analyses, and report preparation. Dr. Pasquale Roscigno provided GIS data to aid the site selection process. Drs. Terry Wade and Paul Boothe were responsible for the performance of the organic and inorganic sediment chemistry analyses, respectively. The late Maria Castro provided expert graphical assistance. Alice Fussner assisted in sample collection and the conduct of the toxicity tests. The constructive comments of the GBNEP Scientific and Technical Advisory review team, Lori Robertson, and Duane Chapman helped to substantially improve the final report. We are in grateful for the financial assistance provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Clear Lake Office, which allowed the scope of this project to be expanded.